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## Trump and the myth of U.S. magnanimity in Korea

Robert Park

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U.S. Republican presidential hopeful Donald Trump's highly publicized charges that South Korea has not been paying its fair share within the U.S.-R.O.K. military alliance has caused a political firestorm in the South, with Koreans almost universally expressing offense or alarm at his inaccurate and denigrating assertions.

In a 2013 statement about extracting further payments for the ongoing American military presence in South Korea, Trump stated: "They're rich because of us. ... They sell us everything. ... We have a huge deficit with South Korea. ... They make a fortune on the United States."

And again to CNN earlier this year, "South Korea is a money machine. They pay us peanuts." Similar ill-informed grievances or -- far more likely -- outright obfuscations were repeated to the New York Times in March, and elsewhere.

More significant than the \$886 million figure, which was the estimated expenditure owed by Koreans for the U.S. military presence within the region last year, Seoul is expected to cover 92 percent of the expense for the inordinate sum of \$10.8 billion—the staggering cost to relocate the headquarters of U.S. troops residing in areas near the Demilitarized Zone, in and north of Seoul, to the city of Pyeongtaek at Camp Humphreys, which is approximately 69 kilometers south of the capital.

Gen. Vincent Brooks, who replaced Gen. Curtis Scaparrotti as commander of U.S. Forces Korea, described the relocation plan on April 19 at a Senate Armed Services Committee confirmation hearing as "the largest Department of Defense construction project we have anywhere in the world."

At the hearing, Gen. Brooks affirmed that the U.S. is in actuality saving money by stationing troops in the country, a verity which the U.S. foreign policy establishment understands thoroughly.

As observed by CNN: defense officials and military experts say the United States is saving money in many cases by stationing troops overseas and having host countries pick up a lot of the tab. While many foreign policy experts have long maintained that the United States receives more than its fair share of benefits in terms of security and influence by having foreign bases for troops, the Pentagon is now arguing the deployments make financial sense as well.

Furthermore, and in direct correlation, there is the tragic and disturbing fact that in the aftermath of the 1950-53 Korean War -- which claimed the lives of up to 5 million people, most of whom

were Korean civilians -- the Republic of Korea has by necessity become one of the world's leading arms purchasers, with the vast majority of weapons bought having been made in America.

According to the most recent U.S. Congressional Research Service report on the subject, the R.O.K. government imported armaments equivalent to a whopping \$7.8 billion in 2014 -- the most in the world, out-buying nations such as Iraq, Saudi Arabia, India and China -- with approximately \$7 billion, or 90 percent of sales, coming from U.S.-based contracts.

In September 2014, Reuters reported that among these acquisitions include 40 of the highly controversial F-35 Lockheed Martin Corp fighter jets, for which South Korea is to pay \$7.06 billion for delivery by 2018-2021. The F-35 is reported to be the "costliest weapons program in human history." According to Lockheed Martin, 18 U.S. states are relying on the F-35 for \$100 million in economic activity or more. In total, the F-35 is believed to be responsible for some 133,000 U.S. jobs across 46 states.

On April 19, South Korea's Yonhap News Agency reported that the F-35 had been determined by a government auditor to possess major software issues -- complications so egregious that if not rectified would require "taking the entire F-35 fleet offline." The Pentagon promptly refuted the Government Accountability Office's April 14 report by saying "the problems are not serious" and that the "F-35 program will fly on."

Yet Trump's adversarial expression "we will not be ripped off anymore" may elicit a more poignant sense of personal and moral outrage than those exorbitant figures ever could, for surviving members of the estimated 10 million Korean families permanently separated from their relatives and beloved ones as a direct consequence of the 1945 division of Korea.

The late author and reporter Don Oberdorfer's well-known book *The Two Koreas* employed the terms "thoughtlessly," "suddenly" and "cruelly" when touching on the nature and character of this division, and cited Gregory Henderson, the State Department's first Korean language and area expert who served in Seoul as vice consul at the outbreak of the Korean War on June 25, 1950.

Mr. Henderson wrote in 1974: No division of a nation in the present world is so astonishing in its origin as the division of Korea; none is so unrelated to conditions or sentiment within the nation itself at the time the division was effected; none is to this day so unexplained. . . . Finally, there is no division for which the U.S. government bears so heavy a share of the responsibility as it bears for the division of Korea.

Mr. Henderson was even more emphatic about the U.S.' primary role in breaking up a people that had existed as a unified nation for nearly 1,300 years -- and valued fundamentally their self-determination and independence -- in a 1976 work entitled "Korea: Militarist or Unification Policies":

The United States stands before history as the principal coauthor of the division of Korea -- a responsibility we Americans have for no other of the world's dozen divided nations. We drew

the line of demarcation not merely for the surrender of Japanese forces but between the occupation zones.

Of the 10 million Korean families torn apart by the partition, less than 1 percent have been “reunited” in rare, heavily politicized, indiscreet and heartrending meetings for what amounts to a fleeting moment after a lifetime apart. The first North-South reunions took place on Sept. 21, 1985, more than 40 years after the division. All the more unjust, many of the remaining divided family members have either passed away or are running out of time.

Several historians of both the political left and right have more or less coincided on the truth that the division of the Korean Peninsula was a grave crime.

Even Doug Bandow, a former special assistant to U.S. President Ronald Reagan and a senior fellow at the Cato Institute, who agrees with Trump in many respects concerning Korea, conceded in a 2010 paper: The Korean War was not inevitable. Neither was its scope and impact. Decisions by the U.S. government, and particularly the administration of Harry S. Truman, made both division and war likely on the Korean Peninsula. Had the Truman administration acted differently, there would have been no divided peninsula and no war.